

MONA

BRIAN HOOKER

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MONA

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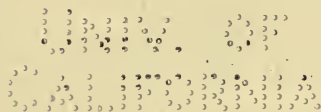
An Opera in Three Acts

The Poem by

BRIAN HOOKER

The Music by

HORATIO PARKER



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1911

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ARGUMENT

In the days of the Roman rule in Britain, *Quintus*, the son of the Roman Governor by a British captive, has grown up as one of his mother's people, known to them as *Gwynn*; has won place and power among them as a Bard, making their peace with Rome; and is to wed *Mona*, the foster-child of *Enya* and *Arth* and last of the blood of Boadicea. But a great rebellion has brewed in Britain under *Caradoc*, their chief Bard and *Gloom*, the Druid, foster-brother of *Mona*. She by birthright and by old signs and prophecies is foretold their leader; and thereto she has been bred up hating Rome and dreaming of great deeds. This *Gwynn* withstands in vain; and lest he lose *Mona* and all his power, is driven to swear fellowship in their conspiracy. Even so, for urging peace he is disowned and cast off by them and by her.

Nevertheless, he follows her as she journeys

v

ARGUMENT

about the land arousing revolt; holding back the Roman garrisons from seizing her, and secretly saving her life and the life of the rebellion many times. For this he is blamed by *The Governor*, his father; but answers that through *Mona* he will yet keep the tribes from war. *The Governor* lays all upon him, promising to spare the Britons if they bide harmless, but if they strike, to crush them without mercy. *Gwynn* therefore, meeting *Mona* upon the eve of the battle, so moves her love for him that she is from then utterly his own. And in that triumph he begins to tell her of his plans for peace. But she, not hearing him out, and barely understanding that he is a Roman, cries for help and calls in the Britons upon him. Yet even so she will not betray him, and lies to save his life. They make him prisoner, and led by *Mona* and the Bards, rush forth against the Roman town.

The fight is crushed. *Arth* falls, and *Gloom* is hurt to death saving *Mona* against her will. *Gwynn*, escaping in the turmoil of defeat, comes upon them and tries to stay further harm, telling

ARGUMENT

Mona of his parentage and beseeching her aid. But she, having taken him for a traitor, takes him now for a liar; and deeming all their woe his doing and her fault for having saved his life, she slays him with her own hand. Then presently come *The Governor* and his soldiers; and *Mona*, before she is led away captive, learns how *Gwynn* spoke the truth, and how by yielding up her high deeds womanly for love's sake she might have compassed all her endeavor.

THE PERSONS

MONA,—princess of Britain.

ENYA,—her foster-mother.

ARTH,—husband of Enya; a British tribesman.

GLOOM,—their son; a Druid.

NIAL,—a changeling.

CARADOC,—the chief Bard of Britain.

THE ROMAN GOVERNOR OF BRITAIN.

QUINTUS,—his son; known among the Britons
as GWYNN.

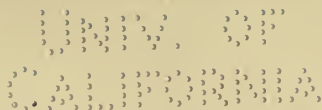
Roman soldiers; Britons, both men and women.

THE PLACE is Southwestern Britain; THE TIME is about the end of the first century A.D., during the earlier years of the Roman occupation. The story, however, is not historical, but wholly fictitious; nor has any attempt been made to secure historical or archæological precision at the expense of human vividness.

ACT THE FIRST

Arth's Hut.


Morning in Midsummer.



ACT I

*The scene represents ARTH'S hut in the forests of southwestern Britain: a rough, sombre interior, so arranged as to appear smaller than the actual dimensions of the stage. Walls and roof are of unhewn logs; the floor is of earth, strewn with rushes and the skins of beasts. Other skins and various clumsy implements hang upon the walls and from the rafters; but there are no warlike weapons to be seen. The rear wall (which is the front of the hut) slants up stage from * right to left, so that the left side of the set*

* *Right* and *Left* mean throughout the right and left of a person on the stage, facing the audience; *Above* and *Below* mean away from and toward the footlights.

*is considerably deeper than the right, and the left wall clearly visible to the audience. Rather * below the centre of this left wall is a large hearth of rough stones, on which a fire is dying down to flickering flames and red embers; the faint wreaths of smoke from it rising through an opening in the roof overhead. Midway along the rear wall is a large doorway, framed with axe-hewn timbers; and on the lintel across the top of this doorway appears the Sign of the Unspeakable Name  burned deeply into the wood, and large enough to be clearly seen, indicating that a Druid has his dwelling here. Curtains of skins, drawn back from the doorway, show the sunlit summer forest without; the light from which, pouring inward through the*

* See note on page 1.

MONA

doorway, makes a moving brightness down the centre of the stage. The right wall is a clay-and-osier partition, pierced near its upper end by a smaller doorway covered with a skin curtain, which leads into a dark inner room. A rude oaken bench stands diagonally above and to the right of the fireplace; bunks or settles are built out from the rear wall on either side of the door and from the right wall below the doorway there. To the left of this last, and as far down as possible, is a clumsy table with benches above and below it; and to the left of this again, at the edge of the lighted space, a low oaken stool.

The light appears to come wholly from the fire and through the doorway from the forest without; so that, although the whole stage is light enough to be clearly seen, and the cen-

MONA

tral portion light enough to distinguish facial expression, the general effect is that of gloom and shadow; deepening around the walls, reddened by the glow of the fire to the left, and contrasting with the brilliant sunshine of the green forest outside.

As the curtain rises, MONA is sitting on the stool, bent forward and gazing across into the fire, her white profile, the flame of coppery hair that falls back along her shoulders, and the gold rings about her brow and right arm thrown into relief against the pale grey of her loose robe. GWYNN, in the green robes of an Ovate, or scholar-bard, stands in the centre of the stage, a little above her. NIAL, in ragged deerskins with a wreath of flowers around his head, lies half asleep upon a bearskin before the fire, his back toward them and his head up

MONA

stage. Above the table, ENYA, in dull brown, is busy removing horns, platters, etc., from the table to the inner room and to their places upon the wall. This action continues for some minutes; but at the curtain-rise she is motionless by the rear wall, her back to the audience. So that MONA and GWYNN, both by their positions in the light and by the coloring of their costumes, are made emphatic in the centre of the opening picture.

GWYNN

Not long now, till the end!

MONA

Until the end. . .

GWYNN

Not long until the end of all my doubt,
Not long until the end of all thy fear —

MONA

Kisses half-willing, half-reluctant arms,
And eyes that shirk their promise. I have
 made peace,
And brought down rest over this angry
 land
Whose trouble was thy trouble . . . Now
 I make
Mine own all I have known so long for
 mine,
All thy dear heart hath given.

MONA

(still without moving)

Have I all

To give thee, Gwynn?

[ENYA *has come down to the table;
she pauses there, watching MONA
closely.*

GWYNN

Still the old fear!

MONA

MONA

(with more animation, turning to him)

Not fear . . .

Only . . . these many days I have not
heard

Thy voice, nor seen thine eyes . . . and
the old dreams

Press closer, and thy face fades, lost among
A sea of raging faces, and a forest
Of white swords; and thy voice, murmur-
ing joy,

Blows down a wind of war-cries . . .

What hath held thee

So long and far away?

GWYNN

Only the need

Of making all things ready for our love.

ENYA

(to GWYNN, sharply)

Hast thou made the bride ready to be won?

MONA

GWYNN

It is this house : there is a shadow here.

MONA

(touching her breast)

There is a shadow *here*, Gwynn.

[ENYA starts, and moves forward as
if about to speak; but as GWYNN
goes on without noticing, she re-
strains herself.

GWYNN

Now I build
A house for us twain in the forest here,
Where sunlights laugh through moving
leaves all day,
'And the sweet blossoms brighten; where all
night
Earth breathes joy and the moon makes
mystery
Of silvern glamour —

MONA

MONA

(heavily and sadly)

Thou shalt never build
That house, Gwynn.

GWYNN

What new change —?

ENYA

Trouble her not —
There is more in her than thy love can
know.

GWYNN

Therefore I love her.

MONA

Dear, I am not changed —
That is our trouble, that I cannot change —
I cannot be like other women, loved
And loving, happy. I was never so;
Only, because of thy dear looks, I dreamed
Of love and thee a little — being young

MONA

And thrilled with May, a woman, feeling
hands

Of little children touch me in the dark,
Unborn, crying to me to mother them. . .
I dreamed of them and thee. Waking, I
know

That I am set apart.

*[She rises, and comes down a step.
NIAL stirs, and turns, half raising
himself to watch them.]*

GWYNN

What fancy —

MONA

Dear,

No fancy. Look —

*[She lays her hand upon the bosom of
her gown, as if to draw it away
from her throat. ENYA springs
forward in violent protest.]*

MONA

ENYA

Thou shalt not show him! No!

MONA

Look!

[She draws the dress from her breast, and shows there the sign /\ red against the white skin like a brand or a birthmark. ENYA wrings her hands. GWYNN starts back to the left side of the lighted space, so that the centre of the stage, up to the doorway, is left open. NIAL is on his feet, curious and wondering. All glance instinctively from MONA to the mark above the door.]

GWYNN

The Name!

MONA

MONA
God's great Name.

ENYA
[*(to GWYNN)*]
Better for thee
Not to have known.

GWYNN
The Name that none may speak . . .
Mona, what means this?

MONA
I was born therewith.
I cannot read its meaning; but I know
Some great adventure waits for me, since
God
Hath set His seal upon me. How shall I
Tarry for love?

NIAL
[*(with a child's curiosity)*]
I cannot understand . . .
What is this great thing Mona has to do

MONA

That hinders loving? Does God write his
name

On them that shall not love? I have it
not . . .

I cannot love, because I have no soul.

MONA

I dare not love until my soul is free.

GWYNN

Thou *art* free! How should this great
task divide

Thy fate and mine asunder? Being one
We shall be stronger for all good. . .

Dear love,

What hinders the fulfilment of our dream?

MONA

I have had other dreams.

GWYNN

Love, thou hast been
Alone and listless, and the warm youth pent

MONA

Within thee, frustrate, like new wine that
works

Close-covered, vapors up these visions.

Come

With me, take life, and leave them! Come
with me

Out of the shadows, out of the aimless days

And empty nights — find thou humanity

And God shall find thee greatness!

MONA

Listen, Gwynn —

And thou, Mother, in dream-lore deeply
wise —

Three nights together have I dreamed this
dream:

[NIAL *has already settled back, un-
comprehending, in his place by
the fire; ENYA seats herself upon
the bench below the table, and
GWYNN, a little later, on the
right end of the bench above the*

MONA

*fire. Only MONA is left standing
and within the lighted space.*

I walked upon a windy beach between
Dark forest and dim sea. Low-swollen
clouds,
Heavy with storm, gloomed overhead and
hung
Bellying against the tree-tops. Close
ashore
Towered one huge wave, curving over me
As a serpent curves to strike, crested with
cloud
And foam, the hollow gulf beneath alive
With tremulous lights and angry glints of
green,
High overhead looming: so that I seemed
To walk in a long cavern roofed with cloud
And walled with foam and forest. And I
bare
Upon my breast a naked sword, close held
As a mother holds her child. So when
the surge

MONA

Poised to plunge down upon me, I thrust
forth

The sword, shaking it seaward, and the sea
Bent backward and forebore. Meseemed
one stood

Beside me, veiled in a white shroud, whose
face

I could not see, that strove to snatch away
My sword. Therefore I smote and slew
him. Then

The surge plunged, and the clouds burst,
and the trees

Fell, thunder-rent, and whelmed me. And
I woke

Trembling, and seeming still to see the
sword

And the grim cloud and the green surge.
And now

Three nights together have I dreamed this
dream.

MONA

GWYNN

(on his feet, but still in the shadow)

And the dream thrice beholden prophe-
sies! —

I wonder . . .

*[He breaks off, pondering. MONA
turns to ENYA.*

MONA

Mother . . ?

ENYA

Dreaming of the sea
Foretells great happenings; dreaming of a
sword,

Struggle . . . but then the forest, and the
cloud,

And the white figure with no face . . .

Nay, child,

I cannot tell. I cannot read this dream.

MONA

GWYNN

God mocks us with a future half fore-
known.

MONA

*(dropping back into her seat, and brooding
there, her face resting upon her hands)*

Nial, dost thou never dream?

NIAL

Always, I think —
Or never. Night by night, and day by
day . . .
It must be all true, or else all a dream.

MONA

(still pondering)

I alone between surge and forest . . .

Gwynn,
What if the sea be — Rome!

MONA

GWYNN

(startled and uneasy)

Rome? —

MONA

The black flood
That whelms our miserable land!

*[As GWYNN is about to protest,
ARTH strides in at the central
doorway — a lean, powerful old
man with a bristle of grey hair
and beard; bare-armed and bare-
kneed, clad roughly in skins.
He advances to the centre of the
stage, and hurls a short Roman
sword, unsheathed, at MONA's
feet.]*

ARTH

Here, child,
I bring thee a child's plaything!
[The women have risen in surprise,

MONA

*and NIAL also is upon his feet,
peering curiously at the sword.
GWYNN remains up left, in the
shadow.*

MONA

Father!

ENYA

Arth . . .

*[MONA has picked up the sword and
is examining it. Suddenly she
raises a drawn face of dreadful
wonder.*

MONA

It is the sword I dreamed of in my dream!

GWYNN

The sword of Rome . . . !

MONA

Father, whence came this?

MONA

ARTH

(*his grimness in sharp contrast with her wonder*)

One

That was a Roman soldier gave it me
Yonder . . . These Romans are a weakly
breed!

ENYA

Thou art a swordless man — it is unlawful
For thee to fight, or to bear weapons . . .

ARTH

Bah!

I had no weapon —

[*He makes the action of strangling an enemy.*]

Only these bare hands
Of an old man.

ENYA

Blood! Blood! Ever more blood!

MONA

ARTH

(disregarding her terror, and looking literally at his hands)

Only a little, bitten from his lips
In dying.

ENYA

Thou hast roused the wolf! Oh, now
We shall endure vengeance! Now, when
our sleep
Was safe, and our days free —

ARTH

Free! Hear the woman!
Ay, free like dogs, free to the lash and the
chain,
Licking the Wolf's feet lest we die — new
stripes
Over old scars, one shame alike to sting
Surrender and rebellion,—tribute wrung
Out of dry hunger, swords taken away

MONA

From free hands, our shrines desolate, our
Bards

Forbidden worship, our kings dead, our
women

Shared with our lords — all men with
blood in them

Hating the Wolf anew with each new day,
Eating and drinking hatred!

[GWYNN *has listened with growing
displeasure, sharing neither
ENYA's terror nor ARTH's rage.
He now comes down, facing the
furious old man with calm au-
thority.*

GWYNN

Thou art a fool,

'Arth. Blood will follow this.

ARTH

(*noticing him for the first time, scornfully*)

Gwynn . . . the man of peace!

What dost *thou* here?

MONA

GWYNN

What I have ever done —
Guarded this house from trouble. Thou
hast broke
The peace, wantonly slain a Roman.
Fool,
What hope hath Britain save in Rome's
goodwill?

ARTH

Rome's goodwill! The embrace of the
soft scourge!
Kisses of the kindly spur! A fire's friend-
ship,
A wolf's love!

[MONA *has been standing bright-eyed,
the sword unconsciously clasped
across her bosom, as a mother
holds her child. As ARTH
finishes, she springs forward in
a frenzy before the others, wav-*

MONA

*ing the sword at arm's length,
and shouting.*

MONA

Britain, old Britain! Ruin to Rome!

ENYA

(catching the infection, with shrill fury)
Ruin to Rome!

GWYNN

Be still, women!

*[Their hysteria wilts before his confidence. He turns, facing ARTH,
and pointing steadily to the Sign
above the doorway.]*

By that Sign,

I bid thee, peace. Now . . . thou hast
slain a man —

Go bury him.

*[Their eyes fight. 'ARTH bows his
head.]*

MONA

ARTH

I will go bury him.

[*He goes out, slowly, into the forest.*

MONA *crosses to GWYNN, and
slides her left arm about his neck,
the sword hanging loose in her
right hand.*

MONA

Thou art a man, Gwynn. . .

NIAL

I cannot understand —

What had he done, the Roman, wherefore

Arth

Should slay him?

MONA

[*turning sharply*]

Robbed us of our freedom.

MONA

NIAL

Nay,
Are we not free to breathe sweet breath,
and sing
Under the sun, and laugh beside the fire,
And wonder at the world?

MONA

(to GWYNN, *examining the initials, S. P.*
Q. R. upon the hilt of the sword)

What mean these runes
Here graven?

GWYNN

Senate and Roman People.

MONA

(*swinging the sword*)

See
How light it is! Even I have strength
enough

MONA

To wield this. How can such women's
weapons meet
The long sword and the British axe?

GWYNN

Not so —

*[He takes the weapon from her, and
illustrates his words with the easy
precision of a trained man: at
first quietly, then with increasing
enthusiasm, until at the last he
is vividly possessed by his pa-
triotism.]*

Rome never strikes. . . Thus — thrusting
. . . The point kills
Quietly. . . The edge wastes power.

First the spears,
Hurled all together, bite and bend — then
down
Swings the long legion, every man in turn
Guarded and guarding, shield by shield,
and sword

MONA

By sword, closing the ranks above the
slain —

The third line ready with new spears —
not men

But one steel wall of manhood — eagles
borne

Forward, and trumpets clamoring vic-
tory —

Men die; but the living legion marches on
Conquering. Romans perish — Rome
abides,

Drinking the virtue of her dead strong
sons,

Imperial, immortal!

ENYA

(sourly, with half-suspicion)

Man of peace,
Thou knowest our enemies' warfare over-
well!

MONA

GWYNN

I am a Bard. . . It is my work to
learn. . .

MONA

(*eagerly*)

Hast thou fought with them?

GWYNN

I have fought . . . with them —
Before I was a Bard, I fought with them.

MONA

To have stood at sword's point with the
very wolf . . . !

To have pierced flesh, and seen blood flow
. . . to have slain

Romans — and now, to love Rome!

GWYNN

Now I love thee,

And dream of peace.

[MONA *turns listlessly away, and*

MONA

seats herself upon the stool, her head in her hands. ENYA is above the table, and NIAL back in his place by the fire, while GWYNN stands at the left of the lighted space, above the fire: so that the picture as well as the mood of the opening scene are reproduced.

MONA

I have had other dreams:
Fire, and a sound of battle, and a storm
Of hungry swords . . . our towns made
strong once more,
Our shrines made holy as of old. . .

[She rises nervously, and paces to and fro across the lower edge of the light like a caged creature, her hands clasped over the mark on her breast.

MONA

Great God,
What have I done with all this life of mine
To make life worthier? What have I
done —
What can I do?

NIAL

*(innocently, with the air of having found
the answer)*

Thou art very beautiful.

MONA

Beautiful! Will my beauty break the
chain?

— If I might make thereof a charm, to
snare

The leader of our enemies — and then,
While he leaned down and loved me, strike
one stroke

Into his wolf-heart, and leave Britain
free. . .

I dream this; who shall make it more than
dream?

MONA

[GWYNN, *standing motionless with the sword in his hand, has unconsciously stiffened into attention, the sword held vertically at his side. MONA turns upon him suddenly.*

— Give me the sword.

GWYNN

Wherefore?

MONA

Give me the sword!

Thou art like a Roman soldier, standing
so —

It is mine. Give it me!

[*She advances, and tries to take it from him. He resists; then, seeing that she is in earnest, lets go. Their position, at this instant, is exactly that of the previous line:*
“Thou art a man, Gwynn,” on

MONA

p. 26. But in snatching the sword, MONA has drawn its edge across GWYNN's bare right arm. She starts back to his right, dropping the sword, and catching his right hand: so that GWYNN's bleeding arm is outstretched in the centre of the stage. ENYA and NIAL, at the same instant, spring forward and down stage to right and left, horrified at the omen. All this happens at once and in a moment.

MONA

— Gwynn!

[At the moment of her cry, GLOOM enters through the central doorway, releasing the leather curtain so that it falls behind him, cutting off the sunlight. The stage light darkens and reddens to fire-

MONA

light; and all eyes are turned upon GLOOM standing motionless before the doorway in the white robes of a Druid, his arms stretched outward and upward, and his long white staff held vertically in his right hand. His black hair is crowned with oak-leaves, and his black beard flows down over his breast. After an instant, he brings his arms down, stretching them outward and downward, the staff still held vertically; then folds them inward upon his breast, so that the staff, held between his hands which are clasped at his throat, forms with his forearms the Sign of the Unspeakable Name. Then he comes down to GWYNN's left and just below him; picks up the sword, and looks from it to

MONA

GWYNN's *bleeding arm, speaking
with a solemn relish at once
prophetic and malicious.*

GWYNN

(*as GLOOM enters*)

It is naught. . .

GLOOM

By that same blade it is thy doom to die.

MONA

Gloom . . . !

GWYNN

(*facing GLOOM*)

I shall not be slain by prophecies,
Nor by ill-will.

[*Ignoring him, GLOOM passes the
sword to MONA, who takes it
mechanically, and speaks to
ENYA.*

MONA

GLOOM

Mother, take Mona hence.
Tell her. . . Thou knowest all she needs
to know. . .

[As ENYA and MONA go out by the doorway to the right, GWYNN steps back below the table; and GLOOM, crossing up to the central door, draws back the curtain and calls through.]

Let the Bard enter, Father.

[ARTH appears in the doorway, ushering in CARADOC. He is very old, with a skin like wrinkled ivory, and hair and beard like spun glass; his costume is similar to those of GWYNN and GLOOM, but deep blue in color. All his movements are deliberate and impressive; and he has an old saint's air of dreamy optimism.]

MONA

The others bear themselves toward him with reverence. He stands a moment under the doorway, going through the same ritual as GLOOM had done, but with greater dignity and meaning. ARTH and GLOOM fall back to right and left of the door. NIAL remains far to the left, below the fireplace; he takes no part in the ensuing scene, nor do the others notice his presence more than they would the presence of an animal.

GWYNN

(as CARADOC enters)

Caradoc . . !

CARADOC

The peace of the Great Name upon this
house

And all that dwell therein!

MONA

ALL

And with thee, peace.

CARADOC

(coming down to the centre of the stage)

Now let there be an oath between us.

GWYNN

Nay,

I swear no blind oaths. What does Caradoc

Here? What is this that Mona needs to know?

[In answer, CARADOC throws back his gown. GLOOM and ARTH do likewise, showing that each is girt with a great sword. Together the three blades are drawn and held aloft, CARADOC's vertically, the other two slanting in toward its uplifted point.]

MONA

CARADOC

The peace is broken: we have blessed the
steel.

GLOOM

(as the swords are sheathed again)

Thou shalt know all, being made one with
us.

GWYNN

(bitterly)

This is thy doing, Gloom. Thou hast un-
done
Britain, and all our labor.

ARTH

Bah! He loves
Rome overwell, prating of peace, peace,
peace —
Put thou no trust in him.

MONA

GLOOM

(*triumphantly*)

If a man swear

An oath, and bind his honor with a bond,
He shall not break his word.

GWYNN

Have we not sworn

An oath to keep the peace of the Great
Name?

I swear no oath to drown this land in war.

CARADOC

There is no peace that is not won by war.

[GWYNN *still hesitates. He must either swear disloyalty to Rome, or give up MONA, his influence among the Britons, and perhaps his life. To the others, of course, he appears merely driven from his known position as a peacemaker; and in this* GLOOM

MONA

takes pleasure. After a moment

CARADOC *adds gravely:*

Being a Bard, thou art made one with us.

ARTH

Being a Briton, thou art one with us!

GLOOM

Mona herself shall make thee one with us.

[GWYNN *still wavers, and ARTH's
temper gives way.*

ARTH

Enough! Art thou a Roman?

GWYNN

(bowing his head)

I will swear.

CARADOC

Then let there be an oath between us.

[*He drives his staff into the fire, causing it to blaze up. Then ceremonially draws forth a burning*

MONA

*brand, which he elevates before
the sign on the lintel, saying:*

Now,

By the three circles round the Oak, whose
names

Are Death and Life and Godhead . . .
by the signs

Of Earth and Air and Fire . . ; and by
the power

Of the Great Name, . . . which made and
maketh all. . .

Our hearts are sealed forever to this trust;
Our lips are sealed until the work be done.

*[At the pauses, he presents the brand
in turn to GLOOM, ARTH, and
GWYNN; each touches the fire,
and carries his hand to breast
and lips; then CARADOC breaks
the brand in three, laying one
fragment upon the earth, throw-
ing another into the air, and re-
turning the third to the fire.]*

MONA

ALL

By the Great Name; By Earth and Air and
Fire.

CARADOC

The Gorsedd is made ready.

*[He seats himself upon the bench
above the fire, ARTH and GLOOM
upon those to right and left of
the doorway. GWYNN remains
standing, near the table.]*

GWYNN

Caradoc,

Thou art old, having seen generations, wise
With love and sight and sorrow. Thou
hast seen

Boadicea, and the bloody fall

Of that great uprising, and many wars
Since then, lesser but not less vain. Say
thou

How Britain shall fight Rome!

MONA

CARADOC

Thou shalt know all —
It is true, Gwynn, that all our wars were
vain.

They were but partial. Rome is Rome.
Till now

Britain was never Britain. Here a tribe
And there a province fought and fell.

Even she,
The Old Queen, led only West Britain.
Now,

Mount, shore, and plain, wild wood and
wanton town,
Rise every man together, on one day.

GWYNN

It is no matter. Say that Britain means
Britain for once — Rome is the world.

Besides,
What surety have ye that all tribes will rise
Together? This has all failed many
times!

MONA

Some will rise, others wait to learn how
those
Fare, and so all perish. Rome is Rome,
one,
Unconquerable, eternal!

ARTH

Bah! That fear
Crawls in our young men's blood. They
have sucked it in
From weak, soft breasts. A Roman is a
man,
Boy, not a god. Are we men?

CARADOC

We are more:
We are the living will of the Great Name,
Foredoomed, ordained, prophesied. We
have found
That leader long foretold who shall stamp
down
The Wolf, and save Britain — that leader
sought

MONA

Through many years and tears, whom all
shall trust
Even as a babe its mother, and obey
As a young maid her love.

GWYNN

I have heard . . . but where
Shall ye bring up one man all will receive
For the one prophesied? Where learned
he war
And how to lead men? Who, but his own
folk
That knew his childhood shall say:
“What, our boy
The foretold hero?” And sneer, and
spread their scorn
Till many doubt? Where find ye such a
man?

CARADOC

No man.

MONA

GWYNN

(logically triumphant)

What god, then?

GLOOM

Nor no god. We found

A woman.

GWYNN

Woman. . !

GLOOM

*(confirming with some pleasure GWYNN'S
horrified anticipation)*

Mona.

GWYNN

By God's name.

No! Ye shall not make *her* your sacrifice!

(to ARTH)

Thine own child —

ARTH

Nay, no child of mine.

MONA

CARADOC

Myself

Did bring her hither twenty years ago,
To be reared up in secret. She is the child
Of Arvirax and Gerna, very blood
Of the Old Queen, who, dying, told of her.

GWYNN

She is herself, were she the very Queen
Herself, reborn! Ye shall not blast her
joy

For a dream, and a dead woman's proph-
ecy,

And a fool's hasty blood-lust, and a war
Vain, lost before beginning, worthless if
won —

Ye shall not drown her in your surge of
blood!

*[He raises his arms in the Sign, turn-
ing toward the doorway, and
looking from GLOOM to CARA-
DOC.]*

MONA

Is this the peace ye blessed this house
withal?

*[The others have risen. CARADOC
comes forward, facing him, his
staff held before his breast.]*

CARADOC

There is no peace that is not won by war.

*[Then as GWYNN is about to protest
further, he adds, pointing to the
doorway.]*

We are thine elders, Gwynn. Be silent
now.

*[He nods to ARTH, glancing toward
the door on the right; and NIAL,
obedient to ARTH's gesture, goes
out through it. There is a short
pause. Then MONA enters
alone, tall and pale, great-eyed
with inspiration; dressed, like
GLOOM, in the white Druidic
Robes, and with the sword still*

MONA

in her hand. She comes forward slowly, and kneels before CARADOC in the centre of the stage. GWYNN is to the right, below the table, ARTH above and to the right, GLOOM below and to the left.

CARADOC

(laying hands upon her head, quietly)
The peace of the Great Name upon thee,
and the power
Dwell with thee. . .

MONA

(rising, tense with exultation)
It is all so wonderful.
I to fulfil old prophecies. . .
(glancing toward ARTH)
I not
Thy daughter, but a daughter of strange
names
In an old tale. . .

MONA

I to save Britain . . . Strange
As birth. . .

CARADOC

Show me the sign, child.

*[She draws the robe away from her
breast. The stage picture is the
same, with different persons, as
when she first showed it to
GWYNN.*

Twenty years
Past, I beheld that sign, and saved the child
For Britain.

MONA

Strange as love. . .

CARADOC

With God's great Name
Sealed —

MONA

Strange as death. . .

MONA

CARADOC

Hear now the words of the Bard!

(formally)

Boadicea, dying, left her pledge

(For dying eyes look through the veils of
time)

That one sprung of her seed should lead
this land

In its great need against the Roman. Thee,
Last of her line, by that sign on thy
breast,

And by Bard's insight, I receive and de-
clare

For the one prophesied. Thee the Great
Name

Shall guide where many thousand fighting
men

Moulded under thy faith to one strong
arm,

Follow, to save Britain!

MONA

MONA

If I were sure . . .

[She stands rigid, gazing before her into infinity, as one who sees a vision; her soul balancing between sainthood and humanity. ARTH, up right, looks on with frowning impatience, and CARADOC, further down and to the left, patiently and with confidence. GWYNN and GLOOM, to MONA's right and left and a little below her, watch tensely for the critical moment; it is they who are fighting for her.]

GLOOM

Are not thy dreams fulfilled of other
lives,—

Memorable of old wars?

MONA

MONA

How couldst thou know? —
Surely my dreams remember!

(half to herself)

The sea, Rome. . .
The forest, Britain. . . The sword,
war. . . !

GWYNN

Remember
Also the veiled, white figure with no
face —

God mocks us with a future half fore-
known!

*[His tone softens, and he comes close
to her, taking her passive hand.
She looks past his eyes.]*

Thou art a woman, Mona. To be great,
First be a woman.

MONA

MONA

*(leaning toward him a little, but still not
meeting his eyes)*

I have had other dreams,
Of mating and of motherhood — not great,
But very dear. . .

*(still gently, but hardening herself by an
effort)*

Ah, Gwynn, I cannot be
Only a woman!

GLOOM

(venomously, catching at his opportunity),

Nor a pretty toy
For lover's lips to lap —

GWYNN

*(furiously, taking a step forward as if to
strike him)*

Gloom! —

MONA

ARTH

(*sharply*)

Enough words!

Dost thou accept thy task?

MONA

(*waveringly, almost in a whisper*)

What shall I do . . . ?

[*The tide of inspiration flows over her. She throws herself erect, seeming to grow physically larger in her excitement, her face glorious, her arms thrown outward and upward, the sword shining in her hand. Her words are no longer a wail of hesitation, but a superb demand for use.*]

WHAT SHALL I DO?

CARADOC

The soul speaks! Child and Queen,
Come!

MONA

MONA

Yea, I come! Let the ravens follow
me —

They shall be filled! Yea, let the wolves
howl! Fire,—

Fire, and a sound of battle, and the whole
Manhood of Britain raging down to hurl

The wolf-born Roman back into the sea; —

Our towns made strong once more, our
wasted shrines

Made holy, Druid and Bard called forth
again

From lurking in forgotten dens, to fare

Once more in honor over a free land,

Singing and teaching freedom!

[*She is beside herself. GWYNN
springs forward in an agony of
desperate authority, pinions her
arms, and by main force brings
her to face him at arm's length.*

MONA

GWYNN

Mona! Come down
Out of that frenzy. Mona . . . Look at
me!

This is I, Gwynn, a man, flesh and blood,
I

Whose lips and eyes thou lovest. . .

*[The fire fades out of her under his
eyes. She relaxes, and her head
droops.]*

Now! — I say,
Thou shalt not murder all we are, to feed
A fever and a folly.

[He releases her, and steps back.]

Love or war —
Choose!

CARADOC

(slowly and gravely).

Ay, choose well.

MONA

GLOOM

Vision or dream, that boy
Or Britain, lust or glory —

GWYNN

Let her be!
Thou art fain to madden her with words.

GLOOM

And thou
Art fain to eat her soul for thy desire,
To keep her wholly for thy pleasure; and
so,
Holding her merry body in thine arms,
To laugh at Britain!

[His profanation turns the struggle.

*Under the sting of it, MONA
leaps back into her martyrdom.*

GWYNN is beaten.

MONA

Britain, old Britain, Ho!
[The others join in the cry. She

MONA

*turns upon GWYNN with bitter
finality.*

I will not hear thy voice nor see thine eyes
For evermore!

*[As GWYNN turns away from her to-
ward the door, ARTH advances
upon him, with clutching hands.
GWYNN stops above centre, fac-
ing him.]*

ARTH

Let me kill . . !

CARADOC

Nay, we shed
No blood in Gorsedd. If a man swear an
oath,
He shall not break his word.

*[They stand silent and motionless,
while GWYNN draws back the
curtain, letting in a momentary
flood of pure sunlight, passes out
slowly into the bright forest, and*

MONA

is gone. The curtain falls behind him across the light.

GLOOM

For evermore,
Thou shalt not see his face!

[MONA *stands motionless, with bowed head, down centre, the sword clasped across her bosom. CARADOC crosses to her and kneels at her feet, drawing his sword and raising it aloft. ARTH and GLOOM, to right and left, ARTH above her and GLOOM below, do likewise.*

ALL

Hail, Child and Queen! . .

MONA

(still in an inspiration)

Fire . . . and a sound of battle, . . and
a dream

Reborn out of old years, and a new song,

MONA

Terrible with the joy of angry men
Gaining and guarding freedom —

[The tension snaps. She drops her arms and wilts as if under a violent blow; turns half toward the door, and takes a step as though to follow.]

— Gwynn! Ah, Gwynn!

For evermore, I shall not see his face. . .

[The sword falls from her hand. She turns from the door again, buries her face in her hands, and shakes with sobbing, like a child. The others have risen at her first giving way, and stand transfixed, their swords still raised aloft.]

[The CURTAIN delays for a moment, to let the picture strike home; then falls quickly.]


END OF ACT FIRST

ACT THE SECOND

The Cromlech in the Forest.

A Month Later, Evening.

ACT II

THE SCENE represents a Cromlech, or Druidic open-air temple in the forest; so placed that its centre is in the centre of the stage, about ten feet above the footlights. At this point rises a huge oak-tree, venerable with mistle-toe and streaming moss; whose branches, spreading out on either side, extend the whole width of the proscenium, just under the arch. Immediately in front of the tree is a rude altar, composed of a single block of stone roughly rectangular in shape, about three feet high and four long. On its front is hewn the Sign  of the Name; and those branches of the tree which reach out toward the audience seem curiously to repeat this

MONA

figure, bending downward and outward in three diverging lines. Behind the tree is a semicircular wall of large rough stones, whose diameter is a little less than the width of the stage. Directly behind the tree is an opening in this wall, six or eight feet wide; and the semicircle ends on each side about the same distance above the curtain, so as to give the impression of similar openings there — as if the other half of the circle were out in the audience. This wall is crumbling and irregular, nowhere more than four feet high: so that one looks over and through it, seeing beyond it and some distance back the huge standing stones of the outer circle, separated by about twice their own width; and between and beyond these again, green and mysterious forest as far as the eye can reach. Even now, the structure appears old

MONA

and neglected; the forest is creeping in between the stones of the outer circle, and the space between it and the wall is dotted with bushes and young saplings. One or two of the great stones have fallen; the inner wall is crumbling here and there, and a few loose stones are lying about within; and the ground there is uneven, and covered with deep moss. Upon the altar are the charred remains of a small fire, some time extinct; and the moss thereabout is trodden as by many feet.

The light is that of a clear summer evening just after sunset and before dusk. Striking slantwise across the scene from left to right, it marks the points of the compass (south being up stage) and the hour of the day. During the act, it grows darker so gradually that the advancing night is

MONA

*noticeable only as called attention to
by the actors. And the end of the
act takes place in bright moonlight.*

*As the curtain rises, NIAL is seen within the
inner circle, dancing with his shadow;
at first to left of the altar, afterwards
over the whole open space.*

NIAL

(still dancing)

Brother am I to all the trees, and child
Of the warm-sweet earth and the merry
sun —

And all the birds and blossoms and wild
things

Of the forest, they are my brothers
too. . .

*[A bird begins to sing and flutter
among the branches above him.
He holds up his arms.*

Come dance

With Nial, my brother!

MONA

[The bird lights on his hand.

They are not afraid —
They know I have no soul.

*[Dancing again, the bird fluttering
about him.*

Is it not brave
To breathe sweet breath, and sing under
the sun,
And laugh beside the fire, and have no
soul?

*[He pauses, to the right of the tree, in
a kind of dreaminess which is
his nearest approach to thought.*

Mona and Gloom and Gwynn — all my
wise friends.

Surely their souls torment them. They
have strange

Hot joys called Love and Hate and Fear,
wherewith

To burn themselves. . . I cannot under-
stand. . .

[Dancing again.

MONA

Nay, I had rather have my playfellow
To dance with. He must be my brother
too,

For the earth and the sunshine made him.

Brother, come,

Dance with Nial! Leap with Nial! Ho!

[Pausing again, before the altar.]

Perhaps

He is my soul . . . I wonder . . . and
perhaps

Their souls are in their shadows; . . for
their shadows

Gleam in the dark with strange bright
colors — green,

Purple, and crimson; . . but my shadow is
gray,

And in the dark I have no shadow at
all. . .

Perhaps all souls are shadows. . .

Nay, come dance

With me, my soul!

[He is still dancing, to left of the al-

MONA

tar, when THE GOVERNOR, at the head of a few light-armed Roman soldiers, enters up stage. They push rapidly through the trees and into the inner circle.

THE GOVERNOR

'(as they enter)'

Seize him . . ! But slay him not —
[*The SOLDIERS come down left and surround NIAL, who makes no attempt to escape. THE GOVERNOR comes down to right of the tree and below it — a soldierly, vigorous man of fifty, thin-lipped and quick-eyed, the black hair under his helmet just beginning to be threaded with gray; his manner alert without hurry and decisive without pomposity; dangerous and efficient because free from all doubts.*

MONA

NIAL

How red your shadows are . . . !

What would ye have
Of Nial?

THE GOVERNOR

Come hither. Stand there.

[NIAL comes down beside the altar.
(to the soldiers)]

Guard him.

[They close in around NIAL with leveled spears. NIAL remains absolutely unconcerned.]

So. . .

[Rapidly examining the altar and the ground about it.]

Footprints! A whole tribe hath been gathered here —

Women, too. . .

Ashes! Ay, a sacrifice. . .

[Finding a spearhead]

Spears!

MONA

(to NIAL)

Listen, thou! What hath befallen here?

NIAL

Nothing. I have been dancing with my
soul.

THE GOVERNOR

Answer me! Who met here? How
many? Whence
And why came they?

NIAL

Gloom says I may not know.

THE GOVERNOR

Who is Gloom, then?

NIAL

My brother. They are all
My brothers. They have souls, and they
are wise.
They say that ye are wolves that eat this
land;

MONA

Therefore, they say, ye shall all surely
die —

But how and when, Gloom says I may not
know. . .

(curiously)

What is it like to die?

THE GOVERNOR

(grimly, but without anger)

Thou shalt soon learn —

A sword, there!

[A SOLDIER draws his sword, and presents it at NIAL'S throat. NIAL remains utterly unimpressed.]

Answer now!

NIAL

I cannot answer —

Gloom says I may not know.

[Looking naïvely at the sword, and reaching out to touch it, as a child might do.]

That sword is like

MONA

The sword that Mona dreamed of in her dream. . .

THE GOVERNOR

Bind him! . . A bowstring round his temples, now —

Silence him!

[NIAL, *still unresisting and uncomprehending, is bound and gagged. A bowstring is knotted about his forehead, and a stick thrust through it to twist. GWYNN enters suddenly from the right.*

GWYNN

Father! — Hold!

[THE GOVERNOR *turns to him with the same matter-of-course formality as if the meeting had been expected and ordinary. GWYNN kneels before him, and THE GOVERNOR lays a hand upon his head.*

MONA

THE GOVERNOR

Quintus, my son,

I bless thee.

GWYNN

(rising, to the soldiers)

Let him go — unbind him!

[They obey without waiting for any confirmation of the order.

GWYNN turns to explain.

Nay,

Father, he would not speak: he is one from
whom,

Unborn, earth-dæmons reft the soul
away —

The harmless, empty body of a man.

NIAL

Gwynn, I give thanks; they would have
done me harm. . .

Surely these are not wolves — the wolves
are all

My brothers.

MONA

GWYNN

Nial —

[NIAL *seats himself up to left of the tree, interested but quite out of the scene.* THE SOLDIERS *draw up in a rigid line at the left end of the wall.*

My father, ask of me.

[*He throws off his green robe, disclosing beneath it the white tunic, breastplate, and short sword of a centurion.*

I am a Roman soldier, and thy son.

THE GOVERNOR

Therefore I came here. Many tongues
have said

Thou wert a Briton, and mine enemy.

GWYNN

Dost thou believe this, father?

MONA

THE GOVERNOR

Quintus, no.

I believe no dishonor of my blood

By hearsay. Answer therefore.

This whole land

Which late lay more at peace than ever,

now

Hums like a hive in swarm. Over the

length

And breadth of Britain, every camp and

town

Sends in the same tale — gatherings by
night,

Forbidden sacrifices in old shrines,

Forging of weapons, Druids preaching war,

And here and there some lonely Roman
slain

Out in the forest. Southward, our own

towns

Return seditious rumors.

What hast thou

To say of this?

MONA

GWYNN

It is all true.

THE GOVERNOR

I have heard

Of one going about among the tribes
To rouse revolt — a woman, beautiful —
Her thou hast guarded and defended, held
Our garrisons from taking her, and left
Her free to stir up trouble at her will —
What of this?

GWYNN

*[As before, without the least shame
or embarrassment, meeting his
father's look fairly.]*

It is true . . . I love her.

THE GOVERNOR

*[Not shocked, nor as a mentor, but as
one who hears quietly the con-
firming of a shameful suspicion.]*

MONA

Boy,
Man's honor hath no subtler enemy
Than longing for a woman.

GWYNN

She is more,
Father — she is their queen, even as though
Boadicea came on earth again,
Whom they believe and follow;

(emphatically)

Winning her,
I win at once all Britain.

THE GOVERNOR

Take her, then!
I took thy mother captive even so. . .
She, lying by my side, saved many lives.

GWYNN

(with premature triumph)

Mona and I together shall save all —
Yet wherein should her body profit me
But if I win her will?

MONA

THE GOVERNOR

(*impatiently practical*)

Play not with words —

A woman's heart is in her body, Boy —

I had thought thee more a man!

Enough! Meanwhile,

What of this war?

GWYNN

There was to have been war;

There shall be peace.

THE GOVERNOR

Their plans, then — ?

GWYNN

I have sworn

Not to betray —

THE GOVERNOR

(*losing patience*)

Betray! Canst thou betray

Enemies?

MONA

(with infinite scorn)

An oath to a Barbarian . . . !

GWYNN

An oath to their god, that is my god, too.

THE GOVERNOR

Gods! In these times, we make new gods
each day!

There is but one god for a man — his name
Is Duty. Speak!

GWYNN

Father, if a man swear,
He shall not break his word. . . .

[THE GOVERNOR'S *patience gives out*
altogether; he motions to THE
SOLDIERS, who spring forward.

Nay, hear me. . .

[*He stretches out his arms. THE*
GOVERNOR hesitates an instant,
then stops THE SOLDIERS with a
gesture, and paces frowningly to

MONA

*and fro before the altar while
GWYNN continues; showing no
sign of relenting, or even of being
impressed.*

All

These years of peace are mine — my work.

I went

Among my mother's people, owned their
god,

Became their Bard, knew them and . . .
honored them —

Do men love legions, or confide in foes?

They hate Rome; I have healed that
hatred. Now,

Where the old scars ache shall we stab
again

Till the whole body perish? True, our
arms

Will crush them down. How long will
they lie still?

Hearts, not swords, make our Roman prov-
inces! —

MONA

Let peace make one conquest that shall endure!

THE GOVERNOR

(*pausing*)

Words again! When a sullen-snarling hound

Slinks close behind thy heel, dost thou delay

For parley? Strike the first blow, and be done!

GWYNN

These are no curs, to snarl and lick the lash —

These are they whom great Cæsar could not quell!

[THE GOVERNOR *faces him, impressed for the first time.*

GWYNN *goes on with the authority and confidence of his ideal.*

MONA

My way or thine — One peace or many
wars —

Choose! Art thou general, or governor?

THE GOVERNOR

Thou hast failed thy duty; wilt thou teach
me mine?

GWYNN

(*steadily*)

Truth spoken by a traitor still is true.

THE GOVERNOR

[*With a gesture of almost weary im-
patience.*

Words again! Show me deeds. How
shall we try

Thy truth?

GWYNN

I said there was to have been war;
I say there shall be peace.

MONA

THE GOVERNOR

Then prove thyself! —

[He pauses, for a moment of judgment; then delivers his ultimatum with deliberate emphasis.]

See now:

I hold these dogs in my two hands,
And if they move, I break them.

(with a gesture)

Thou hast said
They will obey thee; prove it. Hold their
hands

From bloodshed, and I pardon them. Let
one

Drop of blood flow, and I will drown their
vain

Rebellion in a surge of death, burn out
Conspiracy with fire, and crucify
False hopes on every tree in the forest!

(more slowly and calmly)

Now,

MONA

Save them. Thou art their fate. All
hangs on thee.

Let them lie still and live, or strike and die !
I have spoken.

GWYNN

It is well ; I ask no more —
Let them lie still and live, or strike and
die ! —
Mona and I shall hold them harmless.

THE GOVERNOR

*(with a last suspicion, looking keenly into
GWYNN'S eyes)*

Boy,
Thou hast thy mother's blood. . . If I
could think
Thy double garment held a double heart —

GWYNN

(not theatrically, but very quietly)
Two garments, father, but one heart
within ;

MONA

Two nations, and one blood. . .

Nay, I confess
That I have let the weight of my great love
Hang round the neck of duty. . . Now I
pray thee

Trust me . . . or trust me never.

[He kneels, as at first. THE GOVERNOR, with the first gentle emotion he has shown, repeats the gesture of blessing.]

THE GOVERNOR

Be it so —

I trust thee then . . . my son!

[GWYNN rises, and they grip hands.]

If thy faith fail,

Let me die!

GWYNN

The dusk falls. . . Ye are too few
For safety. I will guide you to the town.

[During the preceding scene, it has been growing darker so gradu-

MONA

ally, that only now does one realize that it is twilight. THE GOVERNOR, motioning THE SOLDIERS to follow, goes out centre, GWYNN walking by his side. NIAL, rising, follows them with his eyes until they disappear among the trees. When he can no longer hear them, he turns and comes slowly down.

NIAL

Red shadows, and the souls of angry
men. . .

It must be all true, or else all a dream!

[He lies down at full length before the altar, gazing into the dusk. The moon is just rising, shown by the direction of the stage light changing and the shadows falling from right to left; and her light increases as gradually as

MONA

*the daylight has waned, until by
the time of ARTH'S entrance it is
full moonlight.*

Night, and cool winds. . . How still the
forest is,

Now they are gone! My brothers are
asleep

Already. . . Only the hushed owl drifts
by,

Silently as a winged shadow. . . And
there

The quick bat flutters past, a messenger
To wake the Little People — Nial knows!
Now the small voices under all the leaves
Are telling secrets. . .

*[As NIAL pauses, MONA and GLOOM
enter slowly from the right.
MONA is still in her white robe,
with a spear and a short byrny
over which the sword is girt from
her shoulder; but she has neither
helmet nor shield.]*

MONA

MONA

Nial! Art thou alone?

NIAL

My sister . . !

*[He rises, and stands looking at her
wonderingly.]*

Thou art very beautiful
And very far away —

GLOOM

Nial, what news?

NIAL

The Little People will be out; the bat
Has just gone —

GLOOM

(impatiently)

Where is Arth?

NIAL

I know not.

MONA

GLOOM

Go

And seek him.

[NIAL goes out left, GLOOM turns abruptly to MONA, who is standing with bowed head before the altar.

We have little space to dream.
Our war begins at midnight — before then,
Sacrifice and sword-giving. Hast thou
kept
The tallies?

MONA

Here. . .

[She hands him square wooden bars carved with runic signs. He seats himself on the rock, right, reading them and making additions with his knife.

GLOOM

Twelve myriad fighting men!

MONA

Rome has not half so many souls alive
In Britain! So our work ends — to-night,
war —
To-morrow, victory!

MONA

(turning from the altar, slowly)

If we ourselves

Fail not. . .

GLOOM

Dost thou fear failure?

MONA

*[Moving slowly away from him, to
left of altar.]*

Nay, not fear —

Only . . . all hangs on us.

(pausing)

If yonder town

Fall to-night, then from hill to hill our
fires

MONA

Shall flash the tidings, till all Britain flares
Into one blaze ere dawn. But . . . if we
fail,
How then?

(turning toward him)

Were it not better all should strike
At one forechosen hour, waiting no sign?

GLOOM

What matter? We but prove our faith.

*[He thrusts the tallies into his girdle,
and rises.]*

Nay, more —

Thou art here; Thou, the old Queen's soul
reborn

Our leader and our strength. What fight
can fail

Where thou art? All the hope of Britain
waits

Thee, and thee only!

MONA

MONA

I to fight with men. . .
To pierce flesh . . . and see blood flow . . .

*[She is standing below him and to left,
her head bent, her spear held
slantwise across her body by the
incongruous gesture of clasping
her hands at her breast.]*

GLOOM

(at his full height, magnificently)

Thou to save
And conquer!

(advancing, in an ecstasy)

Have no fear — thy womanhood
And the beauty of thee shall burn before
them, fair

And terrible, a sweet white flame of war,
A light from old years, and a wonderful
death,

And a dream plunging down eternity
To change the world.

MONA

*[He is closé before her, aflame with
an ardor which he struggles to
color with patriotism. This at
first she does not, and then will
not, see.]*

MONA

(impulsively)

Gloom, thou art glorious . . !

If I were sure —

GLOOM

Thou and I throned above
Rejoicing freedom — Thou and I one
power —

MONA

Brother and sister —

GLOOM

Priest and prophetess,—
One soul to be remembered when our bones
Blossom together —

MONA

MONA

Let my work not fail —
I ask no more. Take thou the glory.

*[She draws back from him. He
throws off the mask.]*

GLOOM

Child,
How have I any glory but in thee?
How have I borne thy beauty? How en-
dured
These long dry years of brotherhood —

*[He stretches his arms to her. She
springs back, turning so that the
light falls upon her face, a frozen
majesty in every line of her.]*

MONA

Gloom, Gloom,
I am not woman, but a sword; not flesh,
But steel. Who but thine own self taught
me this?

MONA

GLOOM

It is true. . .

*[He draws back, conquered as much
by reason as by her greater faith.
NIAL enters, from the left, fol-
lowed by ENYA and ARTH.]*

NIAL

They are here, under the moon;
Their souls reach forth before them.

ENYA

*(embracing MONA, with half-hysterical
motherliness)*

My little one

That loved me. . !

*[They move across to the altar,
then draw apart: MONA stand-
ing at the right lower corner of
the altar, ENYA a little above
the altar, to left of the tree.
GLOOM and ARTH are below*

MONA

*them, to right and left. NIAL
remains near the left end of the
inner wall.*

ARTH

Gloom, how have ye fared?

GLOOM

We count

Twelve myriad fighting men.

ARTH

And the time?

GLOOM

To-morrow.

We ourselves move at midnight on the
town.

ARTH

*(drunk with hate, brandishing his spear,
and shouting)*

Ourselves first? I grow young again!

MONA

Ha, wolves
That feast and frolic yonder, sweet with
- oil
And glad with garlands — it shall not be
long,
Not long, now, till the end!

MONA

*[Before the altar, facing forward, her
arms upraised, her face tense
with inspiration.]*

Until the end. . !

ENYA

(taking a step toward her, timidly)
Child, art thou that same child that pushed
my breast
With baby hands, and wailed? Thou art
glorified —
There is a light about thee, and a power —

MONA

MONA

*(rigid, her arms at her sides, looking into
infinity)*

I have remembered old years, and seen men
Fall down and worship me.

ENYA

Did they believe —
All those wild folk — ?

MONA

(half to herself)

It is as if these trees
Bowed themselves down before me — as if
the sea
Obeyed me — yet not me, but what I
am. . .

A vision of swift journeyings by day,
Glimmering forests, windy crags, lone
moors
Immeasurable where birds cry, and gray
sands

MONA

Thunderous with the ever-changing sea —
Torches and shouts, wild gatherings by
night,

And firelit circles of astonished eyes,
Men falling on their faces, oaths and
prayers. . .

Strange as a dream's fulfilment of a dream!
I have heard voices in the dark, and seen
Visions of kings forgotten, bidding me
Go forward, and be strong, and have no
fear —

I have dreamed of the White World, and
God's love

Bathing me like sweet flame. . .

ARTH

Enough of dreams!

Come, let us feast before the battle.
Come!

The time passes.

MONA

MONA

I have no need thereof.

Leave me here for a little while, to pray.

ENYA

Is there no danger? —

ARTH

Nay, with Nial at hand

No harm can fall. Come, then. . .

[He leads the way out to the left.

ENYA hesitates, then follows.

GLOOM, going out last, pauses to look back at MONA standing to right of the altar and just below it.

GLOOM

(slowly)

Foredoomed, ordained,

Prophesied. . .

[He goes out. In the quietness,

NIAL suddenly lifts his head and listens to something in the forest.

MONA

NIAL

Mona — Hark. . .

MONA

(*hearing nothing*)

What is it, Nial?

NIAL

The Little People — They are calling
me. . .

MONA

Go to them.

[*He goes out, up stage. MONA leans
her spear against the tree; moves
to the front of the altar, draws
the sword, and lays it thereupon;
then kneels before it, facing up
stage.*

Night and day, deed and dream, sight
And vision — all one faith, all one de-
sire —
Britain. . .

MONA

[*A pause. GWYNN enters quietly from the right. He stands a moment watching her, just inside the circle.*

GWYNN

(to himself, softly)

God help me now.

[*Another pause. MONA gradually becomes aware of his presence, and rises, facing him, her right hand on the sword, her left at her throat. When she speaks, her voice is tense and hollow, but unfaltering.*

MONA

What dost thou here?

GWYNN

What I have ever done.

MONA

Thou art faithless. Go!

MONA

*[It is the same tone and manner that
crushed GLOOM a little while
since; but this is not GLOOM.
He goes on quite evenly.]*

GWYNN

Why? Dost thou fear to look upon me,
lest

Thine heart change?

MONA

*(stung out of her heroics, and struggling
for self-possession)*

Fear!

(scornfully)

I will not see thy face.

Get hence!

GWYNN

*(advancing upon her, while she shrinks
away, the sword clasped to her breast)*

Cry out then. Is one traitor's life

MONA

So great a matter? Thou that art to slay
Thousands ere dawn, canst thou not see me
die?

MONA
(*desperately*)

Go from me!

GWYNN
(*still nearer*)

True, thou hast loved me. True,
thine heart
Cries out for me — What matter? Thou
art not flesh
But steel. Summon thy swords!

MONA
(*recovering herself and rising into a martyrdom; facing him calmly, with the almost pitying tone of one who will not stoop to anger*).

Gwynn, presently
I must fight. Peradventure I must die.

MONA

Canst thou not hush that little fleshly wail
Called love, and leave me here with God?

GWYNN

Canst thou?

MONA

*(with quiet finality, her hands pointing to
the sign upon her breast)*

I bear the Sign here of a greater thing.
Whereto I am reborn. I am not myself,
But Britain.

*(turning away to the altar as if he were not
there)*

Go now.

GWYNN

Therefore I am here:
There is yet time to save Britain and
thee. . .

— Now all things take one answer!

*[He takes her suddenly in his arms.
She turns, writhing away from*

MONA

*him, her body bent backward,
and her head falling against his
shoulder. Even at first, she cannot
struggle with her full
strength; and presently, as herself
overpowers her, she grows
more quiet, and at last quite still.*

Struggle now —

Call to thy friends. . .

Look! Thou and I alone
In the whole great world, under the dim
sky,
And the night's arms around us. . .

MONA

Let me go —

GWYNN

Night, and earth yearning upward to the
moon,
And the shadows calling to us, and the
winds

MONA

Dizzy with sweet, and the summer's huge
heart, slow

Throbbing around us. . .

Thou and I close, close. . .

MONA

(with closed eyes)

Be still — I will not hear thee. . .

GWYNN

Night, and thou

Near me amid the moonbeams, beautiful —

A lily on the gloom of a dim lake,

Thy golden heart wide open to the wind,

A freshness and a fragrance glimmering up

Out of cool depths — A wild bird with
glad eyes —

A mystery beyond all dreaming dear,

Holier than the hope of pleasing God,

More to be hungered after than lost
youth,—

Lips and arms, life and glory, mine, mine,
mine —

MONA

[He stops suddenly, releasing her. She falls back a step below and to right of him, and stands half-stunned, her hands over her eyes. GWYNN catches the sword from the altar, and holds out the hilt to her, speaking with a sudden jarring sharpness.]

Take thy sword. I shall die by that same blade.

So be it.

Strike now.

[Her hands drop. She gazes at him blindly a moment; then the flood breaks.]

MONA

Gwynn. . . Ah, come to me!

[She stretches forth her arms to him. He flings away the sword; they hold each other.]

MONA

GWYNN

Mona. . !

[A short pause. He draws her down beside him on the rock, she half reclining below him and lower down, her head resting against his knee; he bending over her.]

Night, and thou near me in the warm
gloom. . .

And on thy lips a faintness and a flame — !
All the vain sorrow forgotten — all our
dreams

New born, sweet with surrender — won-
derful,

Holy . . .

MONA

There is a cloud over the moon —
I cannot see thy face. . . Only thine arms
Around me like strong sleep. . . Only thy
voice —

MONA

And all our children laughing in thine
eyes . . !

And it is good for me to put away
Weariness, and the fever of high deeds,
And the dry hunger. . . Now earth sinks
and swims

Falling, and the great river of joy flows
down,—

Inevitable, tender, luminous,—
And whelms me, and I float under the
moon

Quietly, toward the foam-bright sea
. . . Down, down,

Where the glimmering shores grow faint,
and darkness

Buries the sky, and the stars drown, and
the deep

Rises over me, and I dream. . .

How soft

Thy hair is, Gwynn. . .

Far off in the dead void,
Torches flare, and I hear a murmuring

MONA

Of old wars, and fierce multitudes that howl
For me to lead them, wailing women,
prayers,
And clanging swords and shrieking prophe-
cies —
All dull and ugly like some old ill dream.—
Ah, let me not remember. . !

GWYNN

Dear, I bid thee
Remember, and rejoice in all. This night
Thou hast saved Britain.

MONA

Britain. . . Let me go!
[*The spell is broken. She shakes
herself free and stands, dazed,
between the rock and the altar.
GWYNN, also on his feet, and not
realizing the change in her, goes
on confidently.*

What have I done?

MONA

GWYNN

I would not speak till now —
I would not buy thy heart for promises —
Now it is finished! I must have thee first
Made queen over all Britain, then all mine,
Now all for peace.

*“ Let them lie still and live,
Or strike, and die! ”*

Mona, hear me — we two
Shall join in one firm love Britain and
Rome
Forever!

MONA

Gwynn. . . I cannot see thy face. . .
It is all dark. . .

GWYNN

*(too full of his triumph to realize that she
hardly hears him)*

Dost thou need proof? What held
The Roman garrisons from taking thee?

MONA

Child, thou hadst been a prisoner twenty
times

But for me.

MONA

(harshly and dully)

What hast thou to do with Rome?

GWYNN

Not less than thou with Britain. My one
voice

Answers for Rome here —

MONA

What hast thou to do

With Rome?

GWYNN

I am Roman born —

MONA

Thou — Roman . . ?

MONA

GWYNN

Yea,

Moreover —

MONA

Help, Ho!

GWYNN

(utterly surprised),

Mona —

MONA

(frantically)

Treason! Help, Ho!

[She catches up the sword from the ground, and swings it at him, crying:]

— By this same blade it is thy doom to die!

[He catches her arm, and wrests the sword from her. As he does so, ARTH rushes in centre followed by a shouting crowd of Britons]

MONA

with torches and spears; and from the left, a throng of Bards and Druids, led by GLOOM and CARADOC, pour in and across the stage. More and more keep pouring in, men and women, shouting and tossing their weapons. MONA springs back up stage and to the right to let them pass, pointing accusingly at GWYNN. ARTH reaches him first, and strikes at him with his spear, GLOOM attacking him from the left almost at the same instant.

ARTH

(as he strikes)

Ha, Gwynn the Peacemaker!

[GWYNN parries, and strikes him down with the hilt.

MONA

GLOOM

(*as he strikes*)

At last!

[GWYNN, *his back against the rock, disarms him, and hurls him back among the crowd. But by this time the crowd has reached him, and still others, rushing in right, attack him from behind. He is instantly surrounded, disarmed, pinned down upon the rock, and threatened by many weapons. MONA stands above and to the right of GWYNN, upon a rising ground that makes her clearly visible above the heads of the crowd; ARTH and GLOOM are upon their feet again, and pushing forward, ARTH to right of the tree and GLOOM down stage to left of the altar; CARADOC is*

MONA

before the altar, and ENYA up left, among the crowd. The stage is full of raging men, screaming women, and waving torches.

VOICES IN THE CROWD

(as GWYNN is overpowered)

Who is he?

ENYA

Blood! Blood!

MONA

(pointing to GWYNN with the sword)

He is —

[The crowd suddenly quiets to listen; and in the momentary hush, MONA's rage looks upon itself. She could have killed GWYNN with her hands a moment since; but now, in cold blood, she cannot hand him over to be torn in

MONA

pieces. She raises her arms in the sign of the Name; her tone changes.

He is a Bard!

[*The crowd bears back from GWYNN, astonished and awed. CARADOC, ARTH, and GLOOM, break through the shrinking circle of them and wave them on.*]

GLOOM

Heed her not!

CARADOC

He is not one of us!

ARTH

Kill! Kill!

[*The tumult rises afresh. MONA pushes forward in front of GWYNN, driving the Britons back.*]

MONA

MONA

Hold off,

On your lives! Back!

[She turns, facing the three leaders.]

Who am I . . ? Answer me!

Who am I . . ?

CARADOC

The Queen!

[A short pause. No one moves or questions her will. She turns to the Britons who are holding GWYNN.]

MONA

Bind him and lead him hence —
Do him no hurt. . .

[As GWYNN is swallowed up in the crowd, she turns back to the others, once more an inspired Amazon.]

MONA

Give out the swords! Wait not
For midnight — Call the warriors!

GLOOM, ARTH, CARADOC

It is not time —

MONA

I am the time — obey! Give out the
swords!

Rouse the tribe! Sound the gathering!
Bring hides,

Fagots and ladders — Give each man a
torch —

To your work, Druids! Onward, by the
Sign

Of the Name! Britain, Old Britain!
Ruin to Rome!

*[During these last lines, men have
been hurrying about, bringing in
torches, ladders, weapons, etc.,
until the stage is crowded and
tumultuous with tossing lights
and busy and disheveled figures.]*

MONA

A fire is kindled on the altar, and GLOOM and CARADOC take their places to right and left of it, and Druids and the Bards grouped behind them, filling the space immediately about the tree. MONA stands upon the rock to the right, directing all; ARTH and ENYA up stage to the left of the tree; and the whole space above and around filled with confused preparation. As the Bards take their place they raise the following chant, the tribesmen joining in and brandishing their torches and weapons in time to it as they hurry about:

CHORUS

I

Out of the dim dens
Under the mountains,

MONA

Forth from the forest,
Far from the fenlands —
Summon the swordsmen,
Waken the warriors,
Gather the Druids
To battle for Britain —
(Long swords for old Britain —)
Ruin to Rome!

[Three men come in left, bearing armfuls of long naked swords, which they lay before the altar. MONA descends from the rock, sheathing her sword, and places herself before it. As she sings, together with the Druids and Bards about the tree, the second stanza of the chant, she raises each sword in both hands high above her head, passes it from right to left in a circle around the fire, and hands it to GLOOM or CARADOC, who present it to a Bard or Druid

MONA

*kneeling to receive it. As each
receives his weapon, he rises and
rushes out through the crowd,
waving it aloft.*

MONA, GLOOM, CARADOC AND THE PRIESTS

II

By the soul in the flame,
By the death in the earth,
By the life in the air —
 By the sound of the Name
 That no mortal may bear,
 Bringing ages to birth —
For the freedom denied us,
 For the shame of the slave —
Give swords to the swordless,
Bright blades to the Bards,
White death to the Druids —
 To guard us, to guide us,
 To slay and to save!

MONA

[With the singing of the third stanza, the tribesmen and their women begin to rush out and away into the forest in savage disorder, by twos and threes, still singing. The stage darkens gradually, as the torches more and more are carried away; and by the end of the stanza, only the altar-fire flickers against the moonlight. ARTH follows the Britons. MONA, GLOOM, and CARADOC are still in their places by the altar; and a moment after ARTH'S exit, GLOOM draws his own sword and starts after, motioning the others on; CARADOC follows; MONA, catching up her spear from beside the tree, follows in turn, passing to turn with a triumphant gesture as she passes through the inner wall.]

MONA

CHORUS

III

God is grown hungry
Watching our weakness —
Hungry, beholding us
Frail and faint-hearted.
Slay we a sacrifice
Therefore, to feed Him —
Rouse the ravens,
Waken the lean wolves,
Onward for Britain!
(Broad spears for Old Britain —)
Ruin to Rome!

*[The flame on the altar dies down.
Only ENYA remains on the stage.
She runs to the opening in the
wall up stage and stands a mo-
ment looking after the others,
while the torches disappear and
the sound of the singing grows
fainter. Presently she reels down*

MONA

*stage, wringing her hands, and
throws herself full length upon
her face before the altar, not
sobbing but lying still.*

CHORUS

*(outside, more and more faintly, but not
slower).*

IV

The sword, the defender,
 She is holy and human,
 She is white like a woman —
And shapely and slender;
 Demanding a master
To wield her and bend her —
 Aflame for the foeman,
 Athirst for the Roman —
(Heart's blood of the Roman —)
 Red life and disaster —
Revenge, and surrender!

*[The singing dies out in the distance.
There remains only darkness and*

MONA

stillness, and the old woman lying prone before the altar. The fire on the altar flickers and goes out, and ENYA stirs a little, then lies still. Far away in the forest, a wolf howls. Then a moment of utter silence. And then the CURTAIN falls slowly.

END OF ACT SECOND

ACT THE THIRD

*The edge of the forest, fronting the Roman
Town.*

The same night; just before dawn.

ACT III

THE SCENE represents a small plateau on the southern edge of the forest, fronting the Roman Town. On the stage left, the edge of the forest extends diagonally back so that the left upper corner of the scene is hidden in thick woods, sloping upward to the left. The edge of this mass of trees, irregular and diversified with bushes and fallen tree-trunks, indicates that the open space is a natural glade and not a clearing. To the rear is the irregularly concave brow of a declivity at first sharp and steep (as shown by tree-tops just beyond its edge) then gradually sloping away across a shallow valley of meadow-land a mile or so in width; and beyond, on the corre-

MONA

sponding rise of ground across this valley, the Roman Town appears: its apparent height being five or six feet above the stage-level, so that it may easily be seen from all parts of the house. Beyond and on both sides, open rolling country extends to the horizon. On the stage right, a high and craggy mass of rocks extends out on to the stage, in the shape, roughly, of the corner of a square obliquely placed. The wooded top of this is only a few feet below the proscenium arch; from thence the rock descends in a cliff to about the height of a man, then breaks to the level in a mass of boulders and rubble. The cliff is more broken toward its lower end, more precipitous toward its upper; so that near the footlights it may be scaled. Above this cliff, and between it and the edge of the plateau, a broad

MONA

pathway runs diagonally off to the right, sloping down the hillside, and evidently the way to the plain and so across to the Town. Near the plateau's edge and about on a line with the foot of the cliffs to the right, lies a large fallen tree; and on the edge of the forest on the left is a seamed and broken boulder, lying half way up stage. The ground in the centre is fairly level and smooth, grass-grown and sloping a little upward at the edges. The whole effect is that of the mouth of a shallow gorge, open to the southward (up stage) and enclosed on the other three sides between rocky and wooded hills. In general appearance it is by far the most spacious of the three sets; and the only one in which the eye travels back into the extreme distance.

At the beginning of the act, these

MONA

details are invisible, for the time is about half after three in the morning of the same night as Act II; the moon has set, and there is not yet any sign of daybreak; the stage is as dark as is effectively possible — just light enough for the main outlines of the scene and actions of the characters to appear. The Roman Town is visible only by the tiny lights of the battle-fires on the walls and the moving sparks of torches all about, whose reflection glows dull red in the sky above it. And the roar of the battle is heard only as a faint, almost inaudible murmur.

Day breaks very gradually during the act; and the end takes place in brilliant sunlight, the brightest lighting of the entire play.

As the CURTAIN rises, the stage is empty and dark. It is at once apparent that the scene is the mouth of a hill-gorge

MONA

ending in a steep slope with a valley and more hills opposite. But no more is to be seen and the eye is led from darkness to the Roman Town in the distance, aglow with the dim light of its own battle. Presently NIAL and ENYA come through the trees on the left. NIAL crosses to the foot of the rocks; ENYA goes up left to the edge of the slope.

NIAL

(as he enters)

Here we can see, Mother.

ENYA

The town still holds —
I had hoped that red sky showed it all in
flames. . .

And still no sign!

*[She turns and gazes a moment up
over the cliffs to the right, as if
for a signal.]*

MONA

NIAL

What are those tiny lights,
Moving like fireflies in the darkness there?

[Pointing toward the Town.]

ENYA

Torches.

How still the forest is — no wind,
Yet the trees move as if a storm were
near . . .

[In the pause, the noise of distant battle is just audible.]

And listen! . . a dull murmur, like the
sea. . .

[She moves back to the edge, and stands rigid with suspense.]

Fire . . . and a sound of battle.

Surely they

Have had full time by this . . !

How fares the night?

MONA

NIAL

*(seated, unconcernedly, at the foot of the
rocks)*

Not long now. In an hour it will be dawn.

ENYA

*(moving about the stage uncontrollably,
with wild gestures)*

Many there be shall never see that dawn —

God send our own be not among
them . . . Yonder

Beneath that red glow, swords are swung,
and shouts

Go up with groanings, and blood smokes
and shines

In the flare of the battle-fires, and strong
men fall,

And the press wavers —

*[The black bulk of a raven flaps out
of the forest and close over her
head. She starts and cringes*

MONA

away, terrified, as the creature turns and flies straight toward the Town, growing smaller against the sky.

— What was that?

NIAL

(quite unmoved)

A raven. . .

Yet — it is strange:

[He rises, puzzled, and moves a little up stage, looking after it.

He should not fly so soon,
Before the sun is risen. . .

Look! He flies
Southward, against the light. . . How red
it is! —

As if all the battle had one angry
soul. . .

[Casually, as he turns away; a little surprised that ENYA pays no attention.

MONA

Mother, the Little People are all gone
Under the hills. Our war drove them
away;

They cannot live where there is hating.

*[He seats himself as before. In the
forest behind ENYA a wolf
howls, answered by another far
away across the plain. She
shrinks nervously toward NIAL.]*

ENYA

Hush! —

Listen . . . that sound there in the for-
est. . .

NIAL

(unconcerned, as before)

Wolves. . .

(without rising)

Yet — it is strange! They should not cry
so late,

After the setting of the moon.

MONA

ENYA

(*hysterically*)

And still,
No tidings! Can the dogs hold out so
long,
Asleep, surprised, outnumbered. . .
Will the fight
Never be done. . . ?

How many, how many of us
Whose hearts are struggling yonder watch
and yearn
Through the void, endless hush, feeling
their faith
Bleed away drop by drop and hour by
hour!
How many Roman women shall befoul
Their proud hair, hating every sunny day
For this night's sake . . . and the long
nights to come. . .
Surely we women are one sisterhood —
Men make the nations!

MONA

NIAL

Mother, why do men,
Seeking to live more gladly, fight and die?

ENYA

Men die to slay as women die to bear,
Wasting the life we sorrowed giving them
To breed more sorrow. . . So they build
their power,
Binding our love to them with cords of
pain. . .

(breaking out again)

Oh, I have waited many nights like this,
While flesh I bore spilled blood that came
of me,
And the dawn brought the dead home!

*[She drops, exhausted, at the foot of
the boulder, to the left. The
first suggestion of dawn appears:
not light, but a tinge of green in
the blackness of the shadows, and*

MONA

a slight pallor of the sky. The red light fades above the battle, and at intervals the voices of birds are heard in the silences.

NIAL

This is more
Than I can understand. . . Somehow it
seems
I should be wiser, seeing so much
pain. . .
Is Mona then a woman?

[ENYA *does not heed.* NIAL *rises, crosses to her, and lays a hand on her shoulder, peering at her hidden face with a child's untactful insistence.*

Mother, say! —
[*She does not move, and he turns away down left, groping for thought.*
She never gave life; she hath taken it. . .

MONA

— And Gwynn, loving us all, and dreaming peace,—

Is he a man, the same as other men?

[He notices the change in the sky, and tries to interest her in that.]

Look! The light darkens.

[ENYA starts to her feet and crosses up centre, straining her eyes across the dusk.]

The stars fade. The dawn
Is coming. . .

There a bird wakes — listen!

ENYA

God! —

And still no tidings! Oh, if Gloom would
come — !

[There is a crash in the brushwood down the path. A moment later, a man appears, running wildly up the slope — not GLOOM, but a skin-clad Briton breathless, dis-

MONA

*heveled, and bloody. ENYA
rushes across to him and catches
at his arm.*

Oh, what news of the battle? What
news —

*[The man flings himself free without
a word, and crosses down left, at
a staggering run. Then seeing
NIAL, he turns back, and scram-
bles up the rocks out of sight.*

NIAL

Fear!

His terror trails behind him like a smoke —
He is mad-afraid.

ENYA

Woe! Woe!

*[An older man, wounded, draws him-
self up the path. She stops him.*

What tidings? How

Went the battle?

[She clutches at his arm.

MONA

THE OLD MAN

(breathlessly)

Nay, I know not — Let me go —
We were betrayed — They had been
warned of us —
The fight goes on still — Let me pass —

ENYA

(clinging to him)

Tell me,
What of Gloom? What of Arth?

THE OLD MAN

I know not — dead,
Most like — they were among the fore-
most —

ENYA

Mona,
The Queen, tell me of her — ?

THE OLD MAN

I saw her last

MONA

Mounting a ladder, her sword shining, her
hair

Blown backward in the torchlight —

Let me go,

Woman! — I have told all —

*[He breaks from her, and stumbles
away into the forest, up left.
All through the ensuing scene,
scattered fugitives, men mostly,
now and then a woman, scramble
up the path, and hurry across and
away either into the forest or up
the rocks down right. In the
pauses are heard the voices of
awakening birds. Very slowly
the sky pales to a dull flat gray,
like the skin of a corpse; and the
darkness fades into what is more
a sickly weakening of night than
any positive daybreak. It is
light enough to distinguish facial
expression; but there is no sign*

MONA

yet of sunrise, and the distance is still blank and misty. The greenish tinge of the light makes faces and foliage look unnaturally colorless.

NIAL

He does not know —
Mona shall save Britain; Gloom said so!
was it
Not all foretold?

ENYA

Lost. . ! lost. . !

[GLOOM *stumbles in among the fugitives, half dragging, half carrying MONA. He can use only his left arm, for his right is broken near the shoulder, and he is wounded in the side. As he reaches the clear space, he releases MONA, who sinks dizzily upon the fallen tree up right, her*

MONA

head droops forward almost between her knees, and her arms reach limply outward and downward, the left against her left knee, the right hand, still grasping her sword, almost touching the ground: so that the lines of her arms and of her hair falling straight down over her face, suggest the Sign of the Name. Her scabbard is gone, her byrny dented and broken, and her white robe stained with blood; but she is unwounded. GLOOM totters a pace or two down stage and reels back against a sapling, his right arm hanging useless and his left hand pressed to his side. ENYA runs to him and clings about his neck.

ENYA

Gloom!

MONA

GLOOM

(flinging her savagely away)

Off! . . . My arm! —

Hast thou no eyes, woman?

ENYA

(lamenting, not protesting)

My son . . . my son!

GLOOM

Broken. Let be. It is all over.

ENYA

Arth —

Thy father? —

GLOOM

Dead.

ENYA

(softly)

I knew it. . .

MONA

GLOOM

They were awake,
Under arms, waiting for us — their garri-
son

Swelled to an army, sentries on the plain,
Fires ready on the walls — what could we
do?

One traitor is more strong than many
swords —

Our Gwynn did his work well!

ENYA

*(trying, with grotesque tenderness, to quiet
him and lead him away)*

Child, thou art hurt —
Come with me — let thy mother bind thy
wounds —

Nay, lean on me. . .

GLOOM

*(pushing her away, but more gently than
before)*

MONA

Let be. I have my death
Already —

ENYA

(hysterical again)

All that remained to me — my son,
My husband that was young with me —

GLOOM

(with a savage gesture)

Be still!

Thou wilt have time enough for wailing.

[MONA raises herself wearily to a sitting position, pushing back her hair, and looking dully and steadily before her. Her grief is sharply contrasted with ENYA's hysterical and noisy lamentation. It is the quiet, stony pathos of a great nature crushed beyond the relief of complaint: she seems rather to wonder than to regret.]

MONA

*Her manner is like the manner
with which she received the rev-
elation of her mission in Act I:
a stroke of something too sudden
and too great for her to under-
stand.*

MONA

Gloom,
Why hast thou brought me here? I might
have died
Yonder, and not known.

GLOOM

Any place will serve
To die in.

MONA

*(rising, and coming down slowly between
ENYA and GLOOM)*

They all trusted me — the women
Waiting for love, and the sweet-eyed young
men,

MONA

The mothers, and the merry children — all
Holding by me to make them happier —
And I . . . I trusted God.

NIAL

Nay, but He wrote
A sign upon her, that she should not love,
And therefore Rome should die and we be
free —

And it was all promised and prophesied,
And thrice beholden in strange dreams. . .
Is Rome

Stronger than God, then?

MONA

Oh, the fault was mine —
Some momentary deed unwisely done,
Or left undone! I slept, and Britain
fell —

I dreamed, and all the blood of those glad
boys
Rushed out upon the ground — I smiled,
and made

MONA

The Sign of the Great Name a mockery . . .

GLOOM

(*sourly*)

Bah!

Let us be honest! What has God to do? —

Success is all our virtue! Hear the truth —

I sicken at all these holy melancholies —
Thou hadst a vanity, and a girl's dream
Of huge deeds and high services; for me,
I had a lust for lordship, hated Rome,
And hated more that sweet boy-lover of
thine —

His delicate heats and spirit-perfumes;
then,

I too loved thy bright body. Good! We
strove,

As others do, after our own desire —

We failed. Well, we shall die.

MONA

MONA

(forcing herself still to believe in him)

This is thy pain
Speaking. . . It is not like thyself —

ENYA

Gloom, Gloom,
Thou art a priest! —

GLOOM

I *was*. I am a man
Now. Presently I shall be less. . .
What, shamed
At a soul's nakedness? We dress ourselves
In decencies of reason day by day,
Till our own hearts hide from us, and we
march
On proudly, leading God. Oh, we believe
Our brave words while we speak them!
no desire
For praise in Mona, nor in me for her —
All was for Britain!

MONA

[He sinks back, exhausted, on the rocks to the right, overcome by his own bitter violence and his increasing weakness. ENYA rushes to him and raises his head. MONA, sickened by his blasphemy and groping in her own conscience, stands motionless down centre. NIAL, as always utterly unconscious in the presence of emotion, crosses up left, looking up into the trees and out across the valley. The tops of the distant hills are touched with the first slant of sunlight, and the sky tinges with rose and saffron toward the southeast. On the stage, under the shade of the cliffs, there is plenty of light to see by, but the shadows are still purplish, and the colors vague and dull; there is no green in the

MONA

foliage yet, nor blue in the sky.

NIAL

Mona, see — the dawn
Is coming! 'All my brothers waken.

[GLOOM *groans and stirs.* MONA
*turns to ENYA, a new horror of
self-distrust in her eyes.*

MONA

Mother,
What if he spoke truth! What if I did all
For myself, not for Britain. . .

ENYA

Child, who doubts thee?
He knew not what he said.

MONA

He is a Bard. . .
I see now : it was Gwynn . . . Gwynn. . .
[*The sword clasped across her breast.*
There was my fall:

MONA

I knew him faithless — and I loved him;
knew

Him Roman-born — and saved him; knew
his death

Meant life to Britain — and I stayed to
hear

My own blind heart crying for him. God
knows

There was a moment when I gave up all —
All I was given life for, my whole use,
Britain, and many hopes, and my great
dream —

Only to feel the glory of his arms
Around me in the night, only to see
His eyes between me and the stars, only
To know I could not struggle!

NIAL

Is it wrong

To love, then?

MONA

(to herself, softly)

MONA

*One whose face I could not see
Who strove to snatch away my sword. . .*

*[GWYNN enters hurriedly down left in
his Roman dress. At sight of
them he pauses astonished.]*

GWYNN

Mona! — The fight is done, then.

— Art thou safe,

Unharm'd. . ?

GLOOM

What dost thou here, traitor?

GWYNN

*(too much concerned with what is to be
done to grow excited on his own account:
speaking rapidly)*

My guards

Fled with the rest. . . I am no traitor; all
This night's blood, if ye would have lis-
tened to me

MONA

I had saved. This ye know now. I am
still
In time to save your own.

GLOOM

I will yet spoil
Thy triumph! — Give me that sword —
*[He staggers forward, trying to take
the sword from MONA; but his
strength fails in spite of fury,
and he falls back, half fainting.
ENYA and NIAL support him.
MONA turns upon GWYNN in a
rage of scorn.]*

MONA

Roman, begone
Among thy kindred! — if perchance, even
there
Among that carrion brood, any endure
Thy kinship unashamed! *Thou* save us!
— who

MONA

Would owe thee life? Look on thyself!
False friend,
False Bard, false lover. Thou hast done
thy work —
Leave it! God sickens to hear thee speak
his name,
And men take shame of thy humanity —
Why dost thou stand there breeding new
lies? Go —
Leave us clean air to die in!

GWYNN

(*facing her*)

Be silent now . . !
There is more shame to thee saying these
things
Than me to hear them. Look at me. . .
Is this
Falsehood? If there were any reason in
thy rage,
Could I endure to hear it — and from
thee?

MONA

Answer me. . .

[Their eyes fight; but he knows, and she is only certain. Hers fall first. GWYNN goes on slowly and emphatically.]

Hear one word now that clears all:
The Governor of Britain is my own
father —

I am his son — dost thou hear?

[None of them believes. MONA, seeing instantly all that it would mean, sees also how clever a lie it might be; and her faith in GWYNN has been hurt to death. ENYA doubts merely because it fits in with everything so perfectly — a weak mind's instinctive suspicion of finality. GLOOM receives it with a sour howl of derision.]

MONA

GLOOM

Only the son
Of the Governor? Only the son? Tell
the whole truth! Say
The Governor himself — the Emperor
Come from Rome — hail, Cæsar!

ENYA

Nay, it may be. . .

MONA

(wearily, turning away from him)
Gwynn, thou hast lied already many
times —
There is no need of other words.

GWYNN

My word
Speaks for Rome. Giving it for peace, I
bind
The legions. Binding me, ye loosed them.
Come
With me now to my father, make an end

MONA

Of this rebellion ere yet more be slain;
Give peace to Britain, and bind up her
wounds.

MONA

(*monotonously*)

The blood of all our slain cries out on thee,
The tears of all our women fall on thee,
The groans of all our captives answer thee,
Till thy life answer for their lives undone!

*[She stands looking blindly into space,
the sword clasped to her breast,
hearing nothing.]*

GWYNN

For their sake, wait no longer! Thou
shalt learn
If I speak truth —

NIAL

I cannot understand
All this of truths and traitors; but I know
That Gwynn is good: I know that!

MONA

ENYA

It may be. . .

It may be. . .

GLOOM

Nay, go kiss thy lover, girl!

[MONA *does not seem to hear; and her next three lines are spoken as to herself. That which is rising up in her is the death of GWYNN; but the others, each from his own point of view, mistake it for hesitation.*

GWYNN

Mona . . . come!

MONA

— *One whose face I could not see. . .*

GWYNN

Many shall die while we delay — Think
not

Of me; save thine own people!

MONA

MONA

— *One who strove*
To snatch away my sword. . .

NIAL

There is a mist
About thy face, Gwynn —

MONA

— *Therefore I smote. . .*

GWYNN

Nay, then,
I dare not tarry longer, even for thee —
Guard her, Nial.

[He turns away up stage, toward the path. MONA turns, and takes a step toward him, speaking mechanically, in a dry voice: her tone and gesture are a ghastly parody of surrender.]

MONA

MONA

Gwynn . . . I am very weary. . .

NIAL

*(springing forward, frightened for the first
time in his life)*

Mona. . !

Great God! . . thy shadow!

[GWYNN turns back to her eagerly,
and takes her in his arms. Her
head droops forward upon his
shoulder, and her left arm slips
around his neck; her right hand,
holding the sword, hangs at her
side. The pose is precisely the
same as when GWYNN was
wounded ominously in Act I.

GWYNN

Love, now all is done
And we may yet save all!

[She holds him close an instant, then

MONA

suddenly brings the sword up with her free hand, and drives it into his throat. He falls limp in her arms, dying.

ENYA

What hast thou done —

O Child, what hast thou done — !

[The body of GWYNN slips from MONA's hold, and falls at her feet, just below the rock on the left. She stands over him with the sword.]

MONA

I have proved myself.

There lies my sacrifice.

NIAL

For evermore,

Thou shalt not see his face. . .

GWYNN

Mona . . . my father. . .

MONA

[A slight struggle, and he is dead. There is a pause, through which are heard the joyous noises of the forest. The sunlight floods the valley, gleaming white upon the Roman Town, and strikes through the tree-tops from right to left. The stage itself is still in shadow, from the cliffs. GLOOM gets to his feet, and totters over to where MONA stands motionless above the body, gazing into space.]

GLOOM

Nay,
Now I believe all! . . Let me look upon
him. . .

At least, *he* cannot triumph over me. . !
I can die now. . .

Oh, I shall follow him
Through many lives until I find him — yea,

MONA

Standing before the very face of God —
And smite his smiling mouth!

[He turns back to his place, feebly.]

NIAL

For evermore

He cannot answer.

ENYA

Let him be; by this

He has paid all.

GLOOM

*(turning upon her, as he is about to sink
upon the rocks to the right, with a last
outburst of logical anger)*

Paid? By his death? Ay, so —
Then for what evil must I pay with mine?
Which of us wrought this ruin, I or he —
My hate or his love, his peace or my war?
How should we two deserve alike, whose
hearts

MONA

Opposed like East and West? The shame
of one

Honors the other — See now our reward:
Both dead, both brought to shame, both
overthrown —

Behold, O God, thy justice!

*[He raises his arms above his head in
a furious gesture that travesties
the Sign of the Name, reels, and
falls back fainting upon the
rocks. MONA neither sees nor
hears. As ENYA is bending over
GLOOM, NIAL comes down a lit-
tle, looking curiously at a point
in the air seven or eight feet
above the body of GWYNN.]*

NIAL

Mother, look —

Is Gwynn quite dead? He is not far
away. . .

MONA

ENYA

*(turns, startled and glances at the body,
then speaks with the irritation of fright)*

Fool, have I not seen death enough to
know — ?

He is mere earth, I tell thee —

NIAL

Look — his shadow
Shines in the air above him, like a mist
Over the moon. . . See, close above us —
there —

Bound to his body with a golden chain,
And shimmering like the wind above a
fire —

He seems to listen and to wait. .

*[The others, tense with horror, are
gazing where he points, but see-
ing nothing. There is a short
pause.]*

*The body of GWYNN lies just below
the rock on the left, MONA stand-*

MONA

*ing above and a little to left of it.
NIAL is up centre, GLOOM lying
back against the rocks on the
right, and ENYA below and
further to the right. In the
hush, the rhythm of the Roman
march, heard in Act II, begins to
be heard: at first very softly,
then gradually louder and nearer.*

GLOOM

Listen. . .

MONA

A murmur of many voices, like a storm
Over the sea. . .

ENYA

*(crossing up centre, and looking over the
cliff)*

The legions!

MONA

MONA

— And a sound
Of men marching to battle. . .

*[She moves to the centre of the stage,
looking up left, to the head of
the path. NIAL goes up left.
GLOOM lies still upon the rocks.
The Roman music grows louder
and louder.]*

GLOOM

Save yourselves —
There is yet time. I wait here.

ENYA

What have we
To save?

NIAL

There is a cloud over the dawn. . .

MONA

Forest and cloud and murmuring of the
sea. . .

MONA

Surely my dreams remember. . .

[The sunlight, which has darkened while she spoke, clears; and the light striking over the cliffs, fills the whole stage with a blaze of direct sunlight.]

ENYA

I can see them

Winding up the long pathway from the plain,

A multitude of spears.

[A Briton, with an arrow through him, runs up the path, stumbles down right, and falls dead at the foot of the rocks, just above the curtain.]

GLOOM

Welcome, wolves!

[The stage fills with Roman soldiers, entering by the path on the right. Most of them are legionaries in

MONA

their panoply; a few archers. GLOOM and NIAL are surrounded and made prisoners at once. ENYA retreats down right, as the soldiers press forward. MONA remains left centre. Among the last, the GOVERNOR enters, and steps up right. GWYNN's body, from where he stands, is hidden by the boulder. The soldiers pay no attention to it; a corpse more or less does not concern them.

MONA

(as the soldiers march in).

Now,

The end comes. . .

THE GOVERNOR

Guard that woman!

[MONA is surrounded by soldiers.

He looks from her to the others.

MONA

Where is he

Whom ye call Gwynn?

NIAL

Yonder — above himself. . .

GLOOM

(relishingly)

There is a Roman spy here. He is dead.

THE GOVERNOR

Dead! —

*[Coming down centre, he sees the
body. The soldiers turn the face
upward. He stands looking.]*

GLOOM

Past rewarding!

THE GOVERNOR

It is he. . .

(savagely)

Who hath done

This thing?

MONA

MONA

It was I.

THE GOVERNOR

Thou! A woman. . .

MONA

One

That might have been a woman.

THE GOVERNOR

(softly)

Be thou sure

Of paying for this blood. . .

GLOOM

Since *he* has paid,

What matter? He betrayed us. He is
dead.

Thou hast thy triumph. Eat it.

THE GOVERNOR

(with sudden fierceness)

Dogs, ye have slain

MONA

Your own last hope of mercy — the one
soul

Roman-born that had care for you. These
years

He hath made your peace with Rome, won
back for you

Old liberties, given you the strength to
dream

Of new conspiracy! But for his faith,
I should have broken you between my hands
In the beginning. Day by day, I spared
The sword, watching your fools' rebellion
boil

Unpunished. He defended you; he died
Striving to save your miserable lives
From your own folly! I have said.

[His grief breaking through his anger.

My son. . .

My son. . . !

MONA

(slowly, in a dry voice)

Thy son! — Who art thou?

MONA

[THE GOVERNOR, *still gazing at GWYNN'S face and fighting for self-control, pays no heed; it is the soldiers who answer in a fierce and gathering murmur.*

THE SOLDIERS

Governor
Of Britain — Governor and lord for
Rome!

ENYA

O Child, what hast thou done?

THE GOVERNOR

She shall have time
To learn —

[*A soldier gives him the sword, which has been taken from MONA. He takes it mechanically, and stands still gazing at GWYNN'S body.*

MONA

MONA

(to herself)

So that was God's voice, after all!
That weakness, that strange fear of
Gwynn's glad eyes,
That warm pain in my blood answering
him,

That little, foolish whisper in my heart
All night long, that I put away from me,
Smothering it with huge dreams! That
was all

God asked of me — only to drink my joy,
Only to be a woman, only to cease —
From struggling, rest so, and be drowsy-
glad

Like a child comforted! It was too slight
A service for great ends — too small, too
sweet —

Any one could have done so much!

[*With gradually increasing passion,
turning to the others.*

Ah, Gloom!

MONA

And thou, Mother, in dream-lore deeply
wise —

Thou who hast known a child's lips on thy
breast

And life beginning in the dark . . . and
thou,

Nial, whose blind heart makes our wisdom
vain —

Could ye not tell me how great dreams pass
by

'As a storm blows down the wind, while
beauty grows

Day by day out of a thousand littlenesses,
As the rain swells the flood and fills the sea,
Till all things take one answer? —

*[Coming out of her inspiration —
more quietly, awakening to the
realities about her.]*

I might have died
Yonder, and not known.

— See, how Earth holds up
Her freshness to the summer, and the light

MONA

Laughs over living green, and the birds are
glad,

And the sweet blossoms brighten in the sun,
And all the bitter beauty of the day

Makes merry with my sorrow — And I go
To walk alive among dead hours, and see
Pitiless faces and the mirth of men

Whose eyes are evil, and be fawned upon
By strange hands . . . for I cannot even
keep

My faith to him that died because of me,
Nor in a clean death lay my body down
Beside his body. . . I must bear my time,
Having done no good thing, remembering
all —

And there will be so many other days,
So many other days. . .

[*She turns from GWYNN to THE GOV-
ERNOR, quietly.*

Give me the sword —

It is mine. . .

[*Misunderstanding her purpose, he*

MONA

steps back, motioning to the soldiers to restrain her. She looks him in the face almost with a smile.

Dost thou think I can still fear?
I loved him . . . and I killed him. . .

Bear with me
A little.

[She takes the sword, and kneels down by GWYNN'S body, laying it across his breast.

Take the sword now. It is thine.
Thou hast done well for Britain.

For myself,
I have done only what I must have done,
Being myself, holding by mine own sight
And mine own blindness. I have sought
beyond
Love, and above beauty, turning away
From God, to point what way the world
should go,
Scorning my life because I found it fair,

MONA

Following the white fire of endeavor down
Under the last horizon, where stars fail
'And the sea takes me, and the night ends
all,

'And the brave deeds I was too brave to do
Slumber, forgotten. . .

*[She lays her hands upon GWYNN's,
bending over him.]*

Love, I could not be
A woman, loved and loving, nor endure
Motherhood and the wise ordinary joys
Of day by day. . . All that I had to give
I gave thee. . . I have known thy heart
. . . Farewell.

*[She bends down and kisses him on
the forehead.]*

Forgive. . .

*[She rises, and stands among the sol-
diers.]*

Do your will now.

[They bind her hands.]

MONA

I have had dreams —
Only great dreams. . .
A woman would have won.

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